

Cooperative Weed Management Area Grant Program Q&A

Q:What is a Cooperative Weed Management Area?

A Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, individuals, and various interested groups that manage noxious weeds or invasive plants in a defined area

Q:What are the goals of the CWMA program?

Goals of this program include:

1. Developing and sustaining strong partnerships between landowners, government units and other interested partners to manage invasive species across geographic boundaries
2. Controlling emerging weed threats and managing invasive species that threaten natural areas and conservation lands
3. Facilitating the removal of invasive plant species through an integrated pest management approach, and the restoration/reconstruction of native plant communities through an ecosystem approach.

Q: When applying for grants what activity categories (in e-link) are eligible for the program?

Administration/Coordination, Education/Information, Inventory/Mapping, Monitoring/Data Collection, Planning and Assessment, Project Development, Special Projects, and Supplies/Equipment are all possible activity categories. The category of "Special Projects" should be used for on-the-ground invasive species control and plant community restoration activities.

Q: How does SWCD technical assistance relate to the program?

A new practice standard ([practice standard 613](#)) was approved for the program that allowed for “start-up” expenses that are essential to setting up a CWMA including administration, education, inventory/mapping, monitoring, planning, project development, and supplies/equipment. These expenses allow for administrative and technical assistance expenses over the traditional cost-share total of 20% for the first time a CWMA is funded (it does not apply for additional rounds of funding). For additional rounds of funding Districts may use more than 20% of the grant for TA if a request for such use is approved by the Board Conservationist based on a) or b) below:

- a) Other non-state funds, will be leveraged and the district couldn't do the project otherwise, or
- b) Funds are used on a project that is State Cost Share Program or EQIP eligible and the district's most recent Financial Report indicates less than an 18-month fund balance.

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Q:Is there a 25% match requirement for every cost-share agreement?

Being a state cost-share program there is a 25% non-state match requirement. Not every cost-share agreement requires a 25% match; but CWMAs should track their match closely to ensure they get to a minimum of 25% match for the program.

SWCDs are encouraged to include all revenue sources including those above and beyond the match requirements.

Q: What can be used for in-kind cash value as match?

A: In-kind cash value has to be directly attributed to the project or activity accomplishments. Use the following guidance when determining in-kind cash value:

1. Local staff and administrative costs in excess of the reporting and grant management, project development or technical component of the grant funds received.
2. Conservation practice costs may not be increased beyond the actual costs of technical assistance, design, materials, and installation by the application of match. In no case may conservation practice costs exceed 100% of the actual cost of design, materials, and installation.

Q: Can the 25% local match come from the Local Government applying to BWSR ?

A: Yes, the LGU can provide 25% match if the project partners cannot. The 25% match is for the overall grant request. Local in-kind cash value is eligible match.

Q: For grant projects that are approved and funded by the BWSR Board, when can work begin on those grant projects?

A: Work cannot begin on any BWSR grant project until the date when the grant is officially executed by BWSR. The project period starts when the grant agreement is “executed,” meaning all required signatures have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds, and cannot be used as match. Before grant execution occurs, a work plan must be completed by the grantee and approved by BWSR staff.

Q:What type of Agreements should be developed between CWMA partners?

CWMA partners are encouraged to sign agreements to formalize their CWMA's and define the roles of each partner. It is up to individual CWMA's to determine what type of agreement to use and what the agreements should contain. Examples of Cooperative Agreements and Memorandum of Understanding can be found at the following websites.

Cooperative Agreement example: (<http://www.mipn.org/APWMA%20Cooperative%20Agreement.doc>)

Memorandum of Understanding example: (<http://www.mipn.org/APIPP%20MOU%202004.doc>)

Hold Harmless Agreements can be used if partners will be conducting work on private lands or lands owned by other partners to address liability issues. A example Hold Harmless Agreement example can be found at: (<http://www.mipn.org/hold%20harmless.doc>) Liability issues can also be incorporated into MOU agreements.

Q:When should Cost-share contracts be used for the program?

All on the ground weed management and replanting efforts should be included under the “Special Projects” activity category in e-link. A cost-share contract must be used when conducting specific, long-term management activities at a property (similar to traditional cost-share projects). In cases where spot treatment of multiple parcels, such as roadside ditches is conducted, or herbicide is provided to partners for treatment, a cost-share agreement is not required, as long as other agreements are established between the SWCD or CWMA partners and the activity is recorded as part of e-link reporting.

Q: What information should be collected to documents grant activities?

The use of a log is recommended for this program to keep track of activities and to track match. It is encouraged that CWMA partners keep track of hours worked, their hourly rate (this can be a standard billing rate) and if applicable, acres treated for specific activities (e.g. 7-8-09, 8 hours attending meeting at a rate of \$35/hour; or 8-9-08, 6 acres of spotted knapweed sprayed with Plateau herbicide at \$40 per acre). Activities can be logged over the term of the grant and then summarized in e-link as part of mid-term and final grant reporting.

Q: What is expected for program reporting?

[eLINK4Web Reporting Guidelines](#) provide direction for program reporting. The following web-page also provides information about grant end dates: <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/reporting.html>. Final program information will be recorded in [e-link](#), similar to other cost-share programs. As part of the close-out, any CWMA agreements, publicity, brochures, maps, plans and other documents developed for the program should be attached in e-link.

As part of the work plan we are requesting information about what efforts worked related to setting up CWMAs, conducting outreach, and controlling invasive species. We hope to receive some specific details related to treating weeds such as what chemicals worked, at what rates etc.

Q: Who is responsible for grant reporting?

SWCDs who are the primary grant applicants are responsible for grant reporting through e-link.

Q: In the BWSR grant payment schedule, does the first 50% of the funds need to be spent or encumbered to receive the next 40% payment?

A: For information regarding the payment schedule, please see the BWSR Grants Manual: [http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/#/Grant Reimbursement/43/top](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/#/Grant%20Reimbursement/43/top)

Q: The RFP states that prevailing wages apply. What are the grant applicant's responsibilities for compliance?

A: Prevailing wage requirements apply to all state funds used for "projects" that meet the definition identified in M.S 177.42 Subd. 2. As the RFP states, your first source of information for questions about the application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to the Department of Labor and Industry at 651-284-5091, or <http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/PrevWage.asp>. However, the following information may help you better understand these requirements.

The responsibilities of a grant recipient are to: (1) be aware of prevailing wage and ensure their project's cost proposals address this requirement; (2) include prevailing wage information in their bid and contract documents; and (3) receive and maintain the payroll reports that contractors will furnish every two weeks. Prevailing wage does not apply to administrative activities of the grant recipient or construction activities directly conducted by a local government, i.e. if an SWCD uses its own staff to plant trees, prevailing wage would not apply, but if they contracted with Joe's Planting Service it would.

Q: Can a grantee's reporting time be covered by the grant?

A: Yes. Grant management and reporting costs are eligible project expenses.

Q: Which Activity Categories should I use for developing my CWMA application and workplan?

A: Eligible Activity Categories for CWMA projects are outlined below:

Category	Description
Administration/ Coordination	Staff time for local grant administration and reporting.
Education/ Information	Development and implementation of environmental education activities and programs such as workshops, clinics, publications, websites, presentations, fairs, etc.
Inventory/ Mapping	Inventories and mapping of invasive weed population related data.
Monitoring/ Data Collection	Weed management and restoration monitoring and data collection activities, including database updates.
Planning and Assessment	Invasive species management planning.
Project Development	Project support activities which will directly support or supplement the goals and outcomes of the work plan such as: civic engagement; public outreach; initial contacts, actions, and activities with landowners and/or partners; preliminary information gathering; conservation marketing; or other activities.
Special Project	On-the-ground weed management or replanting efforts.
Supplies/ Equipment	Acquisition of equipment, hardware, software (e.g. weed mapping software), or supplies.